

**Chief of Naval Operations
Adm. Jonathan Greenert**

USO Gala Honoring Sailor of the Year

25 October 2013

Admiral Greenert: Thank you very much. I'm very honored to be here this evening. I'd like to offer a special welcome to the parents of our recipient, Sailor of the Year, Petty Officer London. His father Jody is here and his mother Susan. He is the son of the son of a sailor, and like all good sailors he's brought his gorgeous girl with him tonight. So when he comes out here, for all you ladies, he's taken. And trust me, you'll know exactly what I mean.

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of our all-volunteer force. So tonight it's really only fitting that we recognize these brave, committed teammates who epitomize the selfless service that really defines our all-volunteer force. It's this courage and committed force which continues to provide the United States what we call the asymmetric advantage over any potential adversary, just as Americans have done throughout history.

It's also the 60th Anniversary of the Armistice from the Korean War. I'm reminded of one of my favorite movies and my favorite books. It's called "The Bridge at Toko Ri". Some of you may have seen the movie or read the book. It's based on a novel that James Michener wrote about a group of bridges in North Korea during the Korean War that we repeatedly were trying to knock out, a very important supply route. It was almost impossible. It was down in a valley. You had to fly from a carrier, dive down in there, and there was counter-air on the other side. It was almost a shooting gallery. It was nearly impossible. We lost a lot of men in that. But the story speaks of the courage, the sacrifice and the resiliency of the military. In the end, the admiral in charge -- in the movie and the book -- the admiral in charge of the mission was the 7th Fleet commander. He's on the bridge of his aircraft carrier receiving updates on how the mission was going and he's told about some of his pilots who ultimately destroyed the bridge, but some of his favorite pilots perished.

So the admiral asked the question, "Where do we get such men?"

The answer to that question is the answer to the question today. We get them right here, in this great nation of ours. Out here in the audience. People that you support, people that we are fortunate to have in this generation, folks who want to serve and be a part of something bigger than themselves. You can find them right here in this room, as I said, and you can find them anywhere around the world, serving today.

Our Navy awardee, Petty Officer First Class Andrew, he goes by Christian, London, represents the very best that our Navy has to offer. Last year Petty Officer London was deployed in Afghanistan where he participated in 140 combat patrols and operations to find and disable improvised explosive devices, or IEDs as we know them. It's always dangerous work, but on October the 6th while operating with SEAL Team 5, Petty Officer London demonstrated some

very exceptional initiative and bravery when he searched for and he found and he disabled two IEDs without the safety of a bomb protective suit or a robotic device. It was all due to the urgent nature of the tactical situation, the danger that the team was in, and he said we've got to get on with this. His selfless actions allowed the mission to be completed and kept his team safe.

Incredibly, this is exactly what Petty Officer London did on numerous occasions. When the tactical situation required immediate action he ultimately cleared 14 IEDs wearing little more than basically what we're wearing tonight.

Now why did he place himself at such incredible risk? He did so to safeguard the lives of his American friends and his shipmates and his teammates. The protection of shipmates and teammates that he had to ensure so the mission could be accomplished.

Petty Officer London exemplifies the unwavering sacrifice, the service and the courage that is all of this volunteer force that we have, basically the finest in the world.

So for his actions he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal. He was selected as the Junior Sailor of the Year from his explosive ordnance disposal mobile unit, and he was meritoriously promoted to petty officer first class.

Petty Officer London's courage, his exemplary skill and his commitment to the mission make him truly deserving of this award tonight.

So ladies and gentlemen, please help me welcome the 2013 USO Sailor of the Year, Petty Officer First Class Andrew Christian London.

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